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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1942

SUBJECT: "FOOD GIFTS FROM HOME." Information from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If you are planning to send a box of Christmas food to any boy at a camp in this country, you will probably want to get it off in the next few days. Christmas is coming close. And though food gifts can go a little later than other gifts to be sure they arrive fresh, still you want to be sure they'll arrive in time. The boys at camp are going to have fine big Christmas dinners with all the trimmings. But a box of food from home--well, it gets a special welcome because it is from home.

So today here are tips from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help you choose just the right contents for the box. The success of any food gift depends both on the food and on the packing. You wouldn't want your boy with a big Christmas appetite for home food to wait in vain for a box that spilled, or leaked, or became moldy--or was crushed or, broken, or fell out of its wrappings. That happens to many food gifts in spite of all the careful directions of the post office. Every year people try to send food that won't ship well, or they pack it so poorly that it won't stand the trip.

The food in the box from home should be able to stand heat and cold, knocking about, and as much as ten days' wait in the mail. Avoid fragile, delicate food that breaks easily...or greasy, sticky or moist food unless it is packed especially for mailing. Never try to send any food that might spoil on route. Even if your boy loves your fried chicken better than any food on earth, don't try to mail it to him at Christmas. A few day's wait near a post

office radiator will make that chicken unsafe to eat when it arrives. Before you pack chocolate, cheese, doughnuts, or any food that will drip grease, or melt when hot, put it in a sealed carton of wared cardboard or a tight tin.

Jelly, or jam, or any kind of spread also needs to go in a sealed paper container or a tight tin surrounded with shredded paper or shaved wood in a heavy cardboard or wooden box. Don't try to send food in glass. The glass may crack or break, and your boy may try to eat the food anyway with unfortunate results. If you send any spread, remember to send a wooden spoon along with it so that the boy can eat his food gift out of hand, sitting on his barracks cot, if he wants to. And send only enough to eat at one time because barracks provide no room for storing food gifts. By the way, peanut butter and jelly are almost always on the dinner table at army camps so these foods may not be such a treat as some others you could send.

When you are deciding on food for a Christmas box, think first of the foods your boy likes best at home. Any of his favorite foods that will ship well deserves first place. Maybe he has written you that he misses your fudge cake, your fruit cookies, or those salted nuts you used to fix at Christmas. These will be among the thoughtful gifts to send.

Cake is often very difficult to ship successfully. But here's how one mother has been mailing cake to her son in Iceland for many months. She bakes fudge cake in a pound coffee can. She's one of those wise women who has been saving tins. She frosts the cake right in the can, then puts on the tight tins cover, and packs the can in shredded paper in a corrugated - paper shipping box. It arrives in perfect condition. She has been sending these small cakes, baked in coffee cans, every two weeks, and has had enthusiastic thanks.

The cookies that travel by mail best are the firm, rather soft, thick cookies rather than thin brittle snaps that break easily, or crumbly butter

cookies. Square cookies pack better than round. Chocolate brownies and date bars made with honey or sirup travel well and receive a hearty welcome at camp. Brownies travel safely when you frost them on all four sides to keep them moist, and then wrap them separately in waxed paper and pack them in a tin box. You can send date bars, and other firm cookies made with dried fruit, the same way. Be sure to pack the cookies so well that they won't shake around loosely. One woman reports success with refrigerator cookies molded and also shipped in one of the Square waxed-paper cartons that orint butter comes in. She packs the cookie dough in one of these containers to harden in the icebox. Then she slices the dough and bakes the square slices. She wraps the cookies separately in waxed paper and returns them to the craton for mailing.

Here are other ideas for food for the box to camp: salted or spiced nuts in tight waterproof paper bags, or tight tin boxes...fruit cake baked and shipped in the same tin with a little inexpensive knife to cut it...dried fruit or dried fruit candies like raisins or dates stuffed with nuts or fondant... sugared stuffed figs...dried fruits put through a food chopper, then molded in balls, and rolled in chopped nuts.

The boys at camp have more sugar than civilians under sugar rationing so **their** meals contain plenty of sweet's. But an active boy has a big sweet-tooth and awlays appreciates good homemade candy. Fudge pured out to cool in a cheap tin and then mailed right in the tin travels ver well. Taffy or molasses candy individually wrapped in waxed paper is also a good choice. Any homemade candy not too fragile, brittle, or soft is a good choice for the box you send from home.

That's all about the food box except that whatever you can do to make it look Christmasy as well as travel well and taste good will help it say:

"Merry Christmas."

